The Works Progress Administration in Pennsylvania, 1935 to 1940

The study of the Works Progress Administration in operation in Pennsylvania is a study in the workings of American federalism. The responsibility to provide relief for citizens in economic distress is not clearly delegated to either the national or state governments in the Constitution. Congress' power to provide for the "general welfare of the people" may mean that the national government is responsible for relief, but traditionally Americans had followed the English pattern and viewed relief as the responsibility of local and state governments and private citizens. The Depression ended this tradition.

During the Depression, the Works Progress Administration was created in 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt under the terms of the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act. Its purpose was to get able-bodied unemployed persons off the dole and back to work on government projects. The Civil Works Administration, which was a temporary program intended to help workers survive the winter of 1933-1934, was an earlier experiment in federal work relief. Before and during the time the CWA was in operation, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) provided matching Federal Government funds to states for relief for all persons in need (this was usually, though not exclusively, direct relief or the dole). The FERA was administered by the states. The WPA was administered by the Federal Government, and it provided work relief to individuals on relief who were employable (one per family). Once the WPA was in operation, the states provided direct relief (the dole) for unemployables. The WPA spent more and was in operation longer than either of its two predecessors. While the CWA spent more than $951,000,000 in 1933-1934, and the FERA spent more than $4,000,000,000 in 1933-1935, the WPA spent more than

1 In 1939 its name was changed to Works Projects Administration.
$10,500,000,000 between 1933 and 1943.\textsuperscript{2} By 1941, 8,000,000 individuals had been employed by the WPA. Since each worker averaged two to three dependents, the WPA aided between 25,000,000 and 30,000,000 Americans.\textsuperscript{3} In Pennsylvania it employed more persons and spent more funds than in any other state with the exception of New York. The five years of greatest importance for the WPA in Pennsylvania were from 1935 to 1940. After 1940 WPA employment and expenditures dropped enormously as private employment, stimulated by the war, increased.\textsuperscript{4}

This paper attempts to answer the question: What happens to federal-state government relationships when a Federal Government agency assumes considerable authority for what has been a state government function—the granting of relief? The answer concerns politics and finances. Politics are involved because state-administered relief was a political patronage tool and state political leaders expected federally-administered relief to be the same. Finances are involved because once relief became the joint responsibility of federal and state governments, the two differed over how much each should pay.

Given the general administrative structure of WPA, its operation inevitably was intermeshed with party politics—this was certainly the case in Pennsylvania.

Congress provided that any state or federal WPA administrator who earned more than $5,000 a year was to be appointed by the President and approved by the Senate.\textsuperscript{5} In the states, this legislation was applied only to the appointment of the state administrator. In accordance with senatorial courtesy, President Roosevelt consulted with a state's senators before appointing the state WPA administrator. Usually, the political preferences of the Democratic senators predominated.\textsuperscript{6}

Senators Joseph Guffey (Democrat) and James J. Davis (Republican) represented Pennsylvania in the Senate while the WPA was

\textsuperscript{3} Donald S. Howard, The WPA and Federal Relief Policy (New York, 1943), 33.
\textsuperscript{4} Final Report on the WPA Program, 110–112, 120.
\textsuperscript{5} Howard, 113.
\textsuperscript{6} Arthur W. Macmahon, John D. Millett, and Gladys Ogden, The Administration of Federal Work Relief (Chicago, 1941), 270–274.
in operation. Senator Guffey, who had helped to insure the nomination of President Roosevelt in 1932, was the most powerful figure in the Pennsylvania Democratic Party. Guffey controlled federal patronage and, accordingly, the first three men to serve as state administrators were "Guffey men." 

From the very beginning, Senator Guffey and his ally, State Administrator Edward N. Jones, intended the WPA to be a Democratic patronage tool in Pennsylvania. Jones and Guffey believed that state-administered relief had been a "Republican racket" and they intended to make federally-administered relief a "Democratic show." Lorena Hickok, a journalist turned WPA roving field representative, wrote several lengthy letters describing the operation of the Pennsylvania WPA to Chief Administrator Harry Hopkins. In one letter she observed:

WPA in Pennsylvania has never been handled exactly as I—and I think we probably agree on this—would have chosen to have it handled. It's just that fundamentally Joe Guffey and Eddie Jones, on one side, and I, on the other, don't agree on how a WPA show should be handled. They believe in the patronage system. I don't—not on WPA. They may be right. Certainly no one could ever doubt Eddie Jones' sincerity in this matter. . . . Well, Eddie Jones has run WPA in Pennsylvania as he thought it ought to be run. . . . I do know . . . his show is a Helluva lot better than it generally gets credit for being. But, my Lord, it's political! . . . Eddie Jones' friends tell me. "Oh, it's plenty political right here in Pittsburgh," one of them told me today. "Regular ward politics. But—the Republicans would do the same thing if they had WPA, wouldn't they?"

Senator Guffey and State Administrator Jones used two of the three types of WPA jobs for patronage purposes. The vast majority of WPA employees (90 per cent from 1935 to 1937 and 95 per cent from then until 1943) were project workers with the WPA: they

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7 Richard Calvin Keller, "Pennsylvania's Little New Deal" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1960), 125-151. The first administrator was Edward N. Jones, who served from 1935-1937. He was formerly publicity director for Senator Guffey and Governor George Earle in the 1934 election and a member of Earle's cabinet. From 1937 to 1939, J. Banks Hudson was administrator. After he resigned amid rumors that his inability to keep politics out of relief in Pennsylvania had angered WPA administrators in Washington, Lt. Col. Phillip Mathews, who had served briefly in the Earle administration, became the third Guffey-approved state administrator.


9 Ibid., Apr. 29, 1936.
had to be certified by the state relief agency as in need of relief. There is almost no evidence that these project workers were hired for political reasons.\textsuperscript{10} However, most of those who held the other two types of WPA jobs, administrative and noncertified, were political appointees. The administrators appointed by Jones were almost all Democrats, Lorena Hickok discovered.\textsuperscript{11} There were approximately 3,000 WPA administrators from 1935 to 1940, more than in any other state and more than in the WPA headquarters in the nation’s capitol. Only New York City, a separate district on a par with the state units, ever employed more WPA administrators than Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{12} The third WPA job classification was labeled noncertified (not eligible for relief), and those who held these jobs were, like the administrators, hired for political reasons. Most were project supervisory personnel. Observed Lorena Hickok: “On the supervision end, down among the foremen, entirely political. Efficient where the director has been strong enough or clever enough to push off local politicians. Otherwise, not so hot.”\textsuperscript{13} The number of noncertified personnel in Pennsylvania in 1936 was 6.3 per cent or 18,019, well below the legal limit of 10 per cent.\textsuperscript{14} When the legal limit was lowered to 5 per cent in 1937, WPA noncertified personnel in Pennsylvania were cut to 5.1 per cent (10,800 persons).\textsuperscript{15} Their numbers were cut further in January, 1938, to 3.1 per cent (7,000 persons).\textsuperscript{16}
Control of the Pennsylvania WPA by Democratic Party leaders produced a political controversy which passed through three distinct phases. During the first, from 1935 to 1936, Republican Party leaders denounced the WPA for employing only Democrats in administrative and supervisory jobs as well as for coercing WPA project workers into voting for and contributing to the Democratic Party. During the second phase, in 1938, Senator Guffey's control of the WPA was denounced first by rival Democratic leaders during a bitter primary battle and later by Republican leaders in the final election campaign. During the last phase, from 1938 to 1940, political usage of the WPA in Pennsylvania and in other states became a national issue when congressional investigating bodies studied the WPA and recommended legislation to eliminate political control.

The first criticism of the WPA was made by the disgruntled former Republican Governor Gifford Pinchot. In two open letters to President Roosevelt, dated December, 1935, and January, 1936, when the WPA was less than six months old, Pinchot accused State Administrator Jones of working with Senator Guffey to "play politics with relief." He charged that Democratic County Chairmen assessed relief workers for political contributions, and that Republicans were unable to get WPA jobs unless they reregistered as Democrats.17

Pinchot's charges were not taken seriously in Pennsylvania or in Washington because they were considered a bid for political recognition for himself and for possible Republican presidential candidate Senator William Borah of Idaho, for whom Pinchot was campaigning.18 WPA Administrator Harry Hopkins, at the request of President Roosevelt, investigated the Pinchot charges and found them vague and baseless.19

Hopkins took more seriously a charge made by another potential Republican presidential candidate, Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan. In February, 1936, Vandenberg called to Hopkins' attention a letter to a WPA work relief client from the Indiana County (Pennsylvania) Democratic Chairman. The letter said in part:

I am very much surprised that you have not responded to our previous letter requesting your contribution in amount $27 to the Indiana County Democratic campaign fund as I was sure that you appreciated your position to such an extent that you would make this contribution willingly and promptly.

I must, however, now advise you that unless your contribution in above amount is received promptly, it will be necessary to place your name on the list of those who will not be considered for any other appointment after the term of emergency relief work, which, as you know, will terminate in the near future.20

Hopkins took quick, decisive action. He notified WPA workers in Indiana County that they did not have to contribute to the Democratic Party in order to retain their jobs. He censured the Indiana County Democratic Chairman in a letter. And Hopkins told Vandenberg the WPA could not “be held responsible for the acts of the dumb politicians who take it upon themselves to write letters to our employees.”21

Pennsylvania Republican legislators harked back to the charges of Pinchot and Vandenberg during the special session of the state legislature called by Governor George Earle in May, 1936, to pass additional appropriations for relief. Under the prodding of Senator G. Mason Owlett from Tioga County, a close associate of Joseph R. Grundy, who controlled the Republican Party in Pennsylvania, the Republican-controlled State Senate voted to investigate the WPA in Pennsylvania. Owlett chaired the investigating committee of three Republicans.22

Senator Owlett and other Republicans argued that the state could reduce welfare costs if the WPA would employ persons on the state relief rolls for administrative and noncertified jobs instead of putting political appointees, who didn’t need relief, into these positions.23 To confirm this argument, the Senate Appropriations Committee requested of State Administrator Jones a list of WPA administrative and noncertified personnel. He refused, but the information might

21 Harry L. Hopkins, Press Conference, Mar. 6, 1936, Hopkins MSS.
be obtained from other WPA employees subpoenaed by Senator Owlett's committee.\textsuperscript{24}

Before the Committee's first hearing, Hopkins phoned Administrator Jones and received his assurances that no WPA official would testify. Hopkins warned that the senators were pretty smart and the WPA people might get mixed up.\textsuperscript{25}

In the meantime, Philadelphia Democratic Congressman Michael Stack, at odds with Philadelphia Democratic leader John B. Kelly, revealed publicly that all WPA noncertified workers in Philadelphia had to be approved by a Kelly man, and that President Roosevelt had promised Stack that he and other Philadelphia congressmen would be consulted about WPA appointments in the future. This revelation seemed to confirm the Republican accusations and Stack was asked to appear before the senate committee investigating the WPA. He refused, saying that it was a "Republican squabble."\textsuperscript{26}

For the first hearing of the Owlett Committee in Philadelphia on May 30, 1936, six WPA officials, and powerful Philadelphia Democratic Party leader John B. Kelly were subpoenaed.\textsuperscript{27} The six WPA officials ignored their subpoenas. They contended that a state legislative body could not investigate a Federal Government agency. The Committee charged them with contempt, but the six were cleared of these charges by the Common Pleas Court which confirmed their contention that the state had no authority over a federal agency and its employees.\textsuperscript{28} Philadelphia Democratic Chairman John B. Kelly did testify and agreed to produce a list of all Philadelphia Democratic Party officials. The Committee suspected what Lorena Hickok had already discovered and reported in a confidential letter to Harry Hopkins, that many of these Democratic Party officials worked for the WPA.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{24} Philadelphia Inquirer, May 24, 1936, p. 21; Philadelphia Record, May 24, 1936, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{25} Harry Hopkins to Edward N. Jones, telephone conversation, May 27, 1936, Hopkins MSS.
\textsuperscript{26} Philadelphia Inquirer, May 23, 1936, p. 1, May 29, 1936, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{29} Lorena Hickok to Harry Hopkins, Oct. 17, 1936, Hopkins MSS. For Kelly statements, see Philadelphia Inquirer, May 30, 1936, p. 1.
When the Owlett Committee met for the second time on June 4, 1936, in Harrisburg, it was presented with a federal court order restraining it from issuing subpoenas or conducting an investigation of the WPA pending a federal court hearing. The Committee chose to ignore or to misunderstand the order until it had heard some testimony damaging to the WPA. Irwin A. Williamson, former WPA assistant supervisor of "white collar" projects in Philadelphia and adjoining counties asserted that he and other supervisory personnel had to be approved by local Democratic officials before they could get WPA jobs. Later, the federal district court ruled that a state legislative committee had no jurisdiction over a federal agency and issued a temporary injunction restraining the Owlett Committee investigation.

Fearful that President Franklin D. Roosevelt might carry Pennsylvania in 1936, Republican leaders seized upon the WPA issue during the election campaign. John D. M. Hamilton, Chairman of the Republican National Committee, charged that there had been "political perversion of unemployment relief" in Pennsylvania. Throughout September and October, 1936, the Republican National Committee, fed much of its material by Senator G. Mason Owlett, Pennsylvania National Committeeman, charged that Democrats got most WPA jobs, and that WPA workers were assessed for contributions to the Democratic Party, required to work on the private property of their foremen, forced to reregister Democratic, required to buy subscriptions to the Democratic paper We the People, and forced to erect signs extolling Roosevelt and to wear Roosevelt buttons.

Just as the Republican National Committee was inaugurating its campaign against the WPA in Pennsylvania in September, a special committee of the United States Senate investigating campaign expenditures and headed by Senator Lonergan, Democrat from

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Connecticut, began to investigate charges made by Senator Guffey and David L. Lawrence, Chairman of the State Democratic Committee, that two Pennsylvania steel companies had in the past forced their employees to vote Republican. Angered by the Committee's interest only in charges against Pennsylvania Republicans, Senator James J. Davis and John D. M. Hamilton both asked the Lonergan Committee to investigate the political activities of the WPA as well. The Committee responded by sending an investigator to check into the WPA in Pennsylvania.

To assure that its case against the WPA would be heard, the Republican National Committee retained William Hard, a radio commentator best known for his weekly broadcasts called "Back of the News in Washington," to give five nationwide radio broadcasts called "The Purchase of Pennsylvania" on five successive evenings in October. After each broadcast, photostatic copies would be sent to the Lonergan Committee.

The charges made by Hard against the WPA, supported by testimony he gathered from WPA workers, were similar to assertions made earlier by the Republican National Committee: that WPA workers were required, on pain of dismissal, to register Democratic, to contribute to the Party's coffers, and to vote for the Party's candidates.

WPA officials responded promptly to Hard's charges. State Administrator Jones, on the night of Hard's fourth broadcast, went on the radio in Pennsylvania to declare that although the WPA had dismissed many thousands of workers in the state in the last few months, the Republicans could only produce a few affidavits against the WPA and in all cases the affidavits were sworn to by men paid or promised jobs by the Republicans. And in a press conference, WPA Administrator Harry Hopkins charged that Hard's speeches were written in Washington by Sam Jones, a publicity agent.

34 Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 1, 1936, pp. 1, 16.
38 Philadelphia Record, Oct. 9, 1936, p. 1. WPA records show that approximately 35,000 workers were laid off in March and September, 1936. Final Report on the WPA Program, 110.
employed by the Republican Party who got his affidavits by taking hungry WPA workers out to dinner.\footnote{\textit{Hopkins MSS}; \textit{Philadelphia Record}, Oct. 8, 1936, p. 1.}

Hopkins had reason to be worried about the Hard speeches because Lorena Hickok had reported to him that they were based on fact: "Not without reason has Bill Hard picked Pennsylvania to attack. . . . I think we can only hope that Mr. Jones and his people have been clever enough so that the Republicans won't get through the smoke and down to the real fire. So far they haven't."\footnote{\textit{Hopkins MSS}.}

Despite the Hard radio broadcasts, the Senate Special Committee to Investigate Campaign Expenditures, controlled by Roosevelt supporters, decided just before the election there was insufficient evidence to hold hearings on the WPA in Pennsylvania. Republican leaders were angered, Democratic leaders, delighted.\footnote{\textit{Philadelphia Record}, Oct. 28, 1936, p. 1.}

The WPA became a source of controversy in Pennsylvania in election years—first in 1936 and then in 1938. Democratic Party leaders made the WPA a campaign issue in the 1938 spring primary. In both the senatorial and gubernatorial races Senator Guffey backed different candidates than did his former allies, State Democratic Chairman David L. Lawrence and Philadelphia Democratic leaders John B. Kelly and Matthew McCloskey.\footnote{Keller, 295–304.} The WPA was drawn into the primary battle when John B. Kelly telegraphed President Roosevelt that Senator Guffey, with the help of WPA Administrator Edward N. Jones (who was now the publicity director for the Guffey candidates), was coercing WPA workers to vote for the Guffey slate. Kelly asked that the Senator be deprived of his patronage dispensing privileges, clearly implying that Guffey controlled the WPA throughout most of the state. Guffey denied the Kelly charges and one of Guffey's supporters, Representative Francis E. Walker (a Democrat from Scranton), wrote President Roosevelt and charged Kelly with using the WPA for his political benefit. Acting WPA Administrator Aubrey Williams dispatched Francis F. Dryden, WPA Field Representative for Pennsylvania, to investigate both the Kelly and Walker charges.\footnote{\textit{Philadelphia Record}, Apr. 23, 1938, p. 1; \textit{Philadelphia Inquirer}, Apr. 23, 1938, p. 1.} Dryden met with
Kelly and collected a number of affidavits. All of the Kelly evidence concerning Guffey’s use of WPA came from up-state counties and not from Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{44} Guffey probably did control the WPA in these areas, while Kelly himself controlled the WPA in Philadelphia.

Awaiting Dryden’s report, Administrator Harry Hopkins wrote to all WPA workers and administrators that they could vote as they chose. No administrator was permitted to solicit money or votes from the workers and the workers were warned that they did not have to contribute to a political party to keep their jobs.\textsuperscript{45}

Once Dryden had submitted his report, Hopkins notified Kelly that most of his charges of political usage of the WPA were untrue. In many cases those who said that they were discharged for political reasons were actually dropped for being inefficient or for some other nonpolitical reason. In those cases where the Kelly charges were true, Hopkins took disciplinary action shortly after the primary election, when he dismissed ten WPA workers and penalized eight others in Allegheny and Luzerne Counties.\textsuperscript{46}

After the primary, the Democratic Party tried to heal its wounds and Senator Guffey agreed to be the campaign manager for the Democratic slate. The Democratic leaders ceased to attack the WPA.

However, Republican leaders soon resumed their criticism. In August, 1938, Senator Guffey and Governor Earle sent a letter to WPA workers and Democratic officeholders in the state asking for contributions to the Democratic Party and warning that, if the Republicans won the 1938 election, they would go back to the old, bad relief methods rather than continue with the present program.\textsuperscript{47} Republicans criticized the sending of this letter. State WPA Administrator J. Banks Hudson responded by declaring such a letter was “not contrary to WPA regulations.” He maintained that any candidate could ask for money provided he did not menace or threaten voters. David L. Lawrence joined with former WPA Administrator Edward N. Jones to assert that Guffey’s letter was just the usual request for funds. Democrats argued that the Republicans were well financed by industrialists, but that Democrats could raise

\textsuperscript{44} Philadelphia Record, Apr. 26, 1938, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{45} Harry Hopkins to all WPA employees, May 5, 1938, Hopkins MSS., Group 24, Box 50.
\textsuperscript{46} Philadelphia Record, May 14, 1938, p. 1; Philadelphia Inquirer, May 21, 1938, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{47} Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 10, 1938, p. 1.
campaign funds only by appealing to grateful officeholders. When questioned by newsmen, WPA Administrator Harry Hopkins agreed that soliciting money from WPA workers without threats was “legal enough,” but he opposed it because the men should spend their money on food and clothing and not on politics.

Shortly before the election in 1938, after repeated requests from state Democratic leaders, the WPA added 10,000 men to the work rolls in the state. The WPA naturally claimed that the increase had nothing to do with the upcoming election, although, if this were true, it seems strange that the rolls were cut immediately after the election by 20,000.

Despite the letter and the addition of many workers to the WPA rolls, the Democratic candidates lost the 1938 election. Many Pennsylvania Democratic leaders blamed the WPA for this defeat. At least half of those who replied to Democratic National Chairman James A. Farley’s request for explanations for the 1938 loss laid some blame on the WPA. Several said that the Democrats tried too ruthlessly to coerce WPA workers to vote Democratic and out of resentment they did the opposite. Others resented Senator Guffey’s control of WPA patronage in their areas and claimed that if they had controlled the patronage the election outcome would have been different.

The Congress investigated the WPA in Pennsylvania and in seventeen other states in 1938-1940. Repeated charges of political usage of the agency could no longer be ignored.

The Special Senate Committee to Investigate Campaign Expenditures, headed by Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas, began hearings in June, 1938. The Committee discovered that the Guffey-Earle letter to WPA employees violated U.S. Code, Section 208, Title 18 which forbids federal officials (in this case Senator Guffey)
from soliciting funds from other federal officials (WPA workers). Guffey and Earle, whose signatures were both on the letter, and David L. Lawrence gave affidavits to the Committee that the letter was sent without their knowledge. The Committee accepted their explanation and conveniently blamed former WPA Administrator Edward N. Jones and Ralph Bashore, respectively Vice-Chairman and Secretary of the Democratic State Committee, for sending the letter.  

The Sheppard Committee found considerable evidence of political usage of the WPA by Pennsylvania Democrats. Committee investigators discovered that large numbers of WPA project workers in Luzerne County were summoned by postcards to County Democratic Party Headquarters and solicited for campaign funds (usually $100 apiece). Many did contribute. The investigators also found that Carbon County WPA truckdrivers were solicited for funds and that Luzerne and Northampton County WPA foremen sold tickets to Democratic rallies to their workers. WPA workers were also asked to switch their registration from Republican to Democratic in Luzerne County.

The Sheppard Committee reported to the Senate that the WPA had indeed been used politically in Pennsylvania and in other states and it recommended remedial legislation to prevent this political usage in the future. Congress agreed and in a supplementary appropriation to the WPA in February, 1939, barred WPA administrators from influencing an election on pain of dismissal. Also, WPA employees could not be solicited for campaign contributions nor threatened or promised reward for political activity. Violation of the act would result in a $1,000 fine and/or one year in jail. The Hatch Act later in 1939 extended these prohibitions against political activity to nearly all Federal Government employees.

Complaints of political activity by the WPA declined noticeably. Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Mathews, who became Pennsylvania


54 Ibid., 23-32. Later in 1939 and 1940 a subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee also investigated the WPA in Luzerne and Allegheny Counties and found much the same thing that the Sheppard Committee found. See footnote 50 for full citation.

55 Howard, 116-118.

56 U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, Making Further Additional Appropriations for Work Relief and Relief, Fiscal Year 1939, Hearings, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 1939, 33.
WPA Administrator in August, 1939, warned, "Politics is absolutely out in WPA here under my administration, not only because I think it should be out, but because the law says it is out." He insisted that any WPA official who allowed collections or any WPA workers who contributed to collectors would be fired.

To summarize, Federal Government legislation, by providing that many WPA officials could be appointed only with Senate approval, resulted in state WPA administrators being political appointees. In the case of Pennsylvania, Senator Joseph Guffey, powerful state Democratic leader, chose the first three WPA administrators. These administrators, with Guffey's advice, were able to hire approximately 3,000 administrators to staff WPA offices in the state. In addition, 3 to 6 per cent of WPA project and supervisory employees who were not on relief were also political appointees. Most of these appointments were controlled by Senator Guffey, although in Philadelphia it appears that John B. Kelly, and, to a lesser extent, Democratic Congressman Michael Stack, controlled WPA appointments.

Republican leaders attacked this Democratic control of WPA in 1935, 1936, and 1938. They not only resented so many WPA jobs going to Democrats, but they feared that these Democrats, most of whom were administrative or supervisory personnel, would be able to cajole the mass of WPA workers to register and to vote Democratic. Dissident Republican (and Democratic) criticism of the political power of key Democrats in the WPA was justified: United States Senate and House Committees investigating the WPA confirmed that WPA workers were urged to register and to vote Democratic as well as to contribute to Democratic Party coffers. Remedial legislation was passed by Congress and this legislation, combined with a willingness to enforce it on the part of State WPA Administrator Mathews, resulted in the virtual end of political coercion of WPA workers in the state.

The WPA in Pennsylvania not only became embroiled in political party quarrels, it also conflicted with the state over what was the proper division of financial responsibility for relief between the state and federal governments. Inevitably, this financial conflict had some political overtones because party politics so strongly influenced the operation of the WPA.

57 Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 6, 1939, p. 1.  
There were two quarrels over finances between the WPA and Pennsylvania between 1935 and 1940. Both were precipitated by the state and both ended when the state's share of relief costs dropped. In the first, the former director of the State Emergency Relief Administration charged in December, 1935, that the state was paying more than its fair share for relief because the WPA had not hired as many men as it had promised to do (it was then 100,000 short of its goal). WPA State Administrator Edward N. Jones countered with the political argument that the state relief agency was run by Republicans who refused to co-operate with the WPA because they wanted to maintain control of all relief in Pennsylvania. The quarrel ended in January, 1936, when the WPA began to care for more than 50 per cent of those on relief in Pennsylvania. The WPA continued to bear the biggest share of relief costs in the state until the end of 1937.

A second financial quarrel erupted between the WPA and Republican Governor Arthur James, elected in 1938. James complained that 160,000 was too small a quota for the WPA in Pennsylvania, especially since this quota was not even filled. He charged that WPA quotas had been most severely cut in states with Republican administrations and insisted that Pennsylvania would have to raise its taxes to pay for relief if the WPA did not meet its quota. James had reason to complain because in 1939 the state's share of relief costs was higher than in any year since WPA began. By September, 1939, the state supported two-thirds of those eligible for relief. But it was the lower congressional appropriation made for WPA in June, 1939, and not partisan political considerations, that made it necessary to cut back on WPA employment. WPA administrators sympathized with Governor James and by June, 1940, they had substantially increased WPA employment in the state. At the end

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of 1940, Pennsylvania’s share of the relief burden was below 50 per cent, and Governor James ceased his criticism of the WPA.

The history of the WPA in Pennsylvania from 1935 to 1940 reveals how federal-state government relationships change when a federal agency assumes a major role in the granting of relief, a function performed before the Depression in large part by state governments. The WPA altered the relationship between the national government and the State of Pennsylvania in two ways: politically and financially.

The creation of the WPA gave new power to state Democratic Party leaders. The majority of WPA workers, who had to be taken from the relief rolls, were hired regardless of party affiliations. But congressional legislation allowed approximately 21,000 administrative and supervisory jobs in 1936, 13,000 in 1937, and 10,000 in 1938 to be filled by patronage appointment. Democratic Party leaders filled these jobs with loyal Party workers. This practice was exposed by the investigations of Republican State Senator Owlett and the Republican National Committee, and was confirmed by the observations of a federal WPA official, Lorena Hickok. In addition, congressional investigations in 1939 and 1940 confirmed the charges of Republican leaders that WPA administrators and local Democratic Party leaders pressured WPA workers in Pennsylvania to register in, to vote for, and to contribute to the Democratic Party.

Senator Guffey profited the most from the creation of the WPA. He controlled its patronage, as observed by Lorena Hickok in 1936 and confirmed by State Democratic Party leaders during the Democratic primary battle in 1938. Since Guffey did not control party machinery in the two biggest cities in the state, he lacked an urban power base, and consequently used the WPA to sustain his position in the state Democratic Party.

The WPA not only affected the political relationship between the national government and Pennsylvania, it also altered their financial relationship. Once the Federal Government began to share the cost of relief with the states, conflict arose concerning what was the rightful relief contribution of each government. This conflict

developed under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and continued while the WPA was in operation.

The political and financial problems of the WPA in Pennsylvania could have been reduced with appropriate congressional legislation. Political intimidation of WPA workers, however, was ignored by Congress until 1939, when legislation was passed preventing this practice. Congress never did attack the problem of using WPA administrative and noncertified jobs for political patronage. This practice continued throughout the period. Finally, appropriation bills passed by Congress each year caused enormous fluctuations in WPA employment, making the state share of relief costs vary widely. Had there been less fluctuation in these appropriations, much of the friction between the WPA and the state government could have been avoided.

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